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MARCH 3, 1846.

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By GEORGE PUTNAM.

TOGETHER WITH THE

CHARGE, RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP,

AND

ADDRESS TO THE PEOPLE.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST OF THE HOLLIS STREET SOCIETY.

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PREFACE

TO THE DISCOURSE.

I HAVE gladly availed myself of the opportunity afforded by the interval between the preaching and the publication of this Discourse, to give it a careful revision. In passing beyond the limited and transient means of publication afforded by the pulpit, and giving my thoughts to a larger audience and in a more permanent form, through the press, I have considered it my duty to review, as thoroughly as the time would allow, every position and argument, and to spare no pains to make them more clear. I cannot change any of the opinions originally set forth in the discourse. They are the growth of many years, and all the reflection I have been able to bestow on them since their delivery has confirmed me in them more and more. But I feel it to be incumbent upon me, for the truth's sake, to do what I can, consistently with the original structure of the discourse, to make those opinions plainer, to guard them from misapprehension, and to commend them to the consideration of my Christian brethren. I have reason to think, that, on some points, I failed to convey my full meaning to my hearers, and I am bound to suppose that the failure arose from some looseness or infelicity of statement on my part. I have therefore changed single expressions, wherever by so doing I could make my meaning plainer ; two or three passages that seemed superfluous or digressive have been struck out ; in as many others the thought has been expanded, so as to present

more clearly the positions taken ; and in one instance, I have recast the argument, in order to make its bearing more obvious, and its conclusion more tenable. Believing the doctrines of the discourse to be sound and true, I owed it to the truth to make such alterations in their behalf ; and I also owe it to those who heard the discourse to state distinctly the fact of my making them.

It is better that such public occasions as that for which this discourse was prepared should be generally used for setting forth the internal and vital truths of religion itself, rather than for discussing questions relating to its external, secondary, and merely ecclesiastical affairs. But all subjects of practical interest to Christians, whatever their relative importance, should, in their turn, and in their due proportion, be brought up for consideration. The question which is here opened, it seems to me, is becoming, and must become, a question of some moment among Unitarians, — as it has already become, in one shape or another, in other denominations, according to their several ecclesiastical positions ; but with the affairs of other denominations we would not intermeddle, except to wish them prosperity and peace.

For ourselves, I believe it is widely felt among us that we must become either more decidedly a denomination, or less, — with ecclesiastical lines and tests more definite, or less so. Which course shall we take ? This is a question that cannot be long deferred ; and it seemed to me that any one who should publicly open the question, and declare an individual opinion upon it, — open the way for the discussion and settlement of it, — would be doing good service to the cause of pure religion and true Christian fellowship amongst us. There are other subjects of a far higher spiritual interest ; but this is not one to be wholly passed by, and I trust that none will regret that it has been broached. I gladly relinquish the question to the disposal of others, either to be settled on its merits, or to be put aside as unimportant or untimely.

In taking the ground, that it befits us to become less denom-

inational and ecclesiastical in our views and operations, rather than more so, I seem to myself to be maintaining that conservative position which every thing in the aspect and tendencies of the times compels me to regard as the true position of professional duty and public usefulness in our day. For me to take part with disorganizers, in the present state of social and religious affairs, would belie my whole nature, every conviction of my understanding, and every dictate of my conscience. But a true conservatism is not blind nor undiscriminating. I have no sympathy with that sort of conservatism which would withhold a lifeless body from the grave, merely because it has been so long in the dwellings of men ; none with that which clutches a husk with desperate tenacity, after the tooth of time has eaten out the kernel, and itself become irritating chaff, inclosing nothing and nourishing nobody, — it belongs then to the winds.

It is always a fit question for the conservative to ask himself, What things are to be conserved ? Not every thing, surely, good and bad, useful and useless alike, for ever, under all circumstances, and through all incompatibilities. What is there, it may be asked, in the position, character, and institutions of Unitarian Christians, — the indefinite body of men and churches called by that name, — that should be conserved ? I answer, as a conservative, that the *external* things to be conserved by them are their consistency, their principles of free inquiry, and the strength, independence, and harmony of their churches. These are their great things, — fundamental as regards their external condition, — and are the things to be conserved. And if there are any small things which hinder more than they help these, they are not to be conserved, but they are to be put away, and that in the name of conservatism itself.

If my remarks on our denominational interests generally, and on ecclesiastical councils and representative associations of ministers in particular, shall seem to any to savor of radicalism, I beg them to pause and consider if the charge of radi-

calism does not justly rest elsewhere than on me. Time was when the Westminster Confession, or its equivalent, was the recognized standard of faith in the Congregational churches of New England. That was a real bond, definite and visible. It gave to those churches a visible ecclesiastical unity; and the ecclesiastical usages incident to such a relation were then suitable, and had a use. But our venerated fathers and predecessors put away that Calvinistic standard, and we bless them for it; they set up none in its place, and we bless them for that. They thus put away all that constituted a visible ecclesiastical unity among the churches. They did great things, but they did not quite complete their work. They left us a little to do, and but a little. They destroyed the substance of the old ecclesiastical system, and left it to us to remove, at our leisure, its mere accompaniments, whenever we should come to feel the annoyance or unfitness of retaining, under one set of circumstances, things which belonged to another and very different set. They laid the axe at the root of the old ecclesiastical tree; they cut it down and removed the trunk; — I only suggest the removal of a few dissevered and perishing branches, that still remain to cumber the ground and choke the new and better growth.

The word *ecclesiastical* occurs very frequently in this discourse. I hope it will be understood by all my readers as referring to those ties and usages which unite a large number of churches into a denomination, or general church, — and not as referring to any matters pertaining to the organization of separate churches, or any of the rules or customs by which they manage their own separate affairs, for their own edification and for the defence and extension of the gospel.

Roxbury, March 20, 1846.

DISCOURSE.

WATCHMAN, WHAT OF THE NIGHT? — Isaiah xxi. 11.

IT is with great misgivings that I attempt to answer this question with reference to our own times and our own religious affairs. It is an adventurous thing for any man to cast a horoscope with regard to any extended and complex aspect of human affairs. Whoso undertakes it should do it with modesty and humble deference, remembering that there are others all around as free as he, and wiser than he, it may be, who, from their different position, will read the past differently, and see the present differently, and cherish different expectations and offer different counsels for the future.

It seems to me not inappropriate to an occasion like the present, to attempt a survey — limited and superficial it must needs be, in a single discourse — of the position, duties, and interests of the Christian denomination to which we who are interested in this day's transactions are considered as belonging.

Our denomination, — I know not by what name to call it. It is usually called Unitarian, and I would not be nice in my scruples as to wearing any name, not in itself odious, which any circumstances have brought into vogue. That is a name, however, which refers to a single doctrine, and one that has become less and less a subject of controversial interest; a doctrine, too, which all other denominations profess to hold, and which some do clearly hold, as positively as we do. Besides, there are some persons who are substantially with us, who yet abhor and repudiate the name Unitarian, and their feelings are to be respected. The name will probably continue to be used for a long time. For one, I would say, that it is a name which I never assume and do not covet, yet am not disturbed by. Let any assume it who will. Let any put it upon *me* who will. It shall be no cause of quarrel.

We are sometimes called Liberal Christians. How far we deserve the title, I will not now inquire. But whether we deserve it or not, there is a tone of arrogance about it, and there are objections to any name which none but ourselves are willing to apply to us. We have a right to the name Congregationalists, but that name does not distinguish us from some who are unwilling to be identified with us, and therefore cannot be used as distinctive.

So, then, there is no denominational name which is at once acceptable to all of ourselves, and to the rest of the Christian public when speaking of us. I rejoice that it is so. It shows that we have been so

far true to our theory of free thought and free action, and have consequently so much diversity of thought and action among us, that there is no one term that can clearly define our Christian position, or convey a just idea of what we think and are. It is to be hoped that such a name will never be possible for us, that it will become more and more impossible, until that millennial day when we and other disciples around us shall have all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; and then there will be no fit name but Christian, and that in a higher sense than has hitherto belonged to the title.

I said, "our denomination." Is that a proper expression? Are we a denomination? We are such in some sense, but not so definitely such as most other bodies of Christians. There is no other Christian body of which it is so impossible to say where it begins or where it ends. Something like a centre may perhaps be found, but where is the circumference? It is undefined and wavy. We have no recognized principle by which any man, who claims to be a Christian disciple, and desires to be numbered with us, whatever he believes or denies, can be excluded. We have no definite boundaries, defined by ourselves, put on record, and seen of all men, — none except such as have been incidentally furnished us by other denominations, for their own purposes drawing their own boundaries, separately, on one side and the other, giving us thus a sort of virtual boundary, but a jag-

ged one and full of gaps. We resemble somewhat a certain district of territory in this Commonwealth, which was never incorporated as a town, has no corporate existence, and never had boundaries assigned to it by any act of the legislature or of itself. But other towns were incorporated around it, and so boundary lines after a sort were made for it. That district is what they left. It is not a definite corporation. It is an anomaly in the prevailing system; but its pastures are rich and its fields fruitful notwithstanding, and its inhabitants as free, intelligent, and virtuous citizens as their neighbours.

No, we are not a denomination, in the common and full meaning of that term. And yet we come nearer to being one, have more of the form and semblance of one, than is consistent with our position and our principles. I think we ought not to be a denomination at all. We have not those things which are necessary to the existence of a defined and bounded denomination. We have no marks by which to designate those who belong to us, and no standards by which to test the fitness of their coming among us or remaining among us, or the fitness of their leaving us. We have no recognized creed by which to determine any man's qualification or disqualification for belonging to our ranks, as a denomination.

Are we told that we have such a test and standard in the Bible, — that the Bible is our standard? All other denominations say just the same thing. All claim that as their standard. That does not, then, make us a distinct denomination. Upon that ground,

all other denominations, and all stray, undenominated individuals, might become merged in ours, without giving up any of their peculiarities. So that on that ground we are not a denomination, whatever else we may be. Do you say, the Bible *only* is our standard, and therein we are distinguished and marked off as a denomination? That is a plausible idea, and it has answered pretty well in quiet times; but it is unsound, and does not answer in all emergencies. There is no such thing as the Bible *only*, either for us or other Christians. We, like all others, must take with the Bible some means or principles of interpreting it, ascertaining its purport and requirements. One man says, I take the Bible as the standard, and I take the traditions of the Fathers, or the existing authorities of the Church, as my means of finding out its meaning. Another says, I take the Bible, too, and I take the Westminster Confession, as in my judgment correctly condensing and explicitly stating its doctrines, — my means of interpreting it. Suppose they claimed to be of us. We might receive them gladly, and all who think with them; but then we should not be a distinct denomination, but confounded with all others.

Shall we say that we mean the Bible, as interpreted by fair rules of criticism, — our own, and not those of the Westminster divines or a Romish hierarchy? But what are fair rules of criticism? Are they rules based on the idea, that the Scriptures were composed under the express guidance of inspiration, attending the writers throughout, as some of us maintain? or on the

idea, that there is no such inspiration, and that the Bible is to be dealt with as freely as any other ancient books, as others hold? — for it makes a vast difference on which idea we base our rules of criticism. Or, again, on what system of philosophy shall the criticism and interpretation of the Bible proceed? — that system which makes miraculous attestations necessary to the confirmation of Christ's authority as divine, miracles a chief and essential voucher for the truth of what he taught? or that system which finds the only and sufficient witness and verification of religious truth in the judgments and responses of the individual soul? Or, again, if we choose to be vague, and to say that common sense shall be the interpreter of the Bible, then whose common sense shall it be? — mine, which receives historical facts upon historical testimony and logical grounds? or another man's, who alleges that no kind or amount of testimony can overcome the antecedent improbability of facts which involve the supernatural? Both these kinds of philosophy and of common sense, and all kinds between them, are found among those who profess to base their religion upon the Bible, and to find in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ the best and a sufficient guide of faith and practice. We all, like other men, unite with the Bible one means or principle of interpretation or another, one kind of philosophy or common sense or another. And hence there are almost as great differences among ourselves, or those who are numbered with us, as between us and other denominations. That, therefore, which we have

usually held forth as our denominational test, — "the Bible only," — is not sufficiently definite or distinctive to serve as a real test.

We have not, then, any defined and authorized tests, by complying with which a man belongs to our denomination rather than some other, or by departing from which he can properly be excluded from it. We have not the essential requisites of a denominational existence. I am glad it is so; but whether we are glad or sorry, so it is.

The time has fully come, — I believe this is the thought of many minds among us, — when it is incumbent on the Unitarian denomination, so called, either to draw some boundary lines for itself, and agree upon some sort of standard, and so become really and intelligibly a denomination or a sect; or else to remove, as soon and as entirely as we may, what little show there still is of boundaries and standards, and cease absolutely to be or appear to be a denomination at all. The former course is, on several accounts, impracticable. We could not agree upon any one standard. We need but imagine the attempt to be made. It is against our nature. It would belie all our former ideas and professions. There would be an inconsistency in it that few could endure. Few of us would enter into a sect so formed. The other course seems to me more practicable, and very desirable; that is, to put out of our minds those ideas, and put out of existence those forms and usages, which give us the semblance of being a denomination, and subject us to many of the evils of being one,

many troubles, and inconsistencies, and jars. I refer to those ecclesiastical forms and usages which give a show of ecclesiastical unity, some formal and official connection between different and separate churches or congregations. I may mention the custom of forming councils for ordaining or installing ministers, and sometimes for other purposes, — councils made up of representatives of a number of churches, and speaking and acting officially in their name. Such councils being frequently formed, and, though varying in their individual members, yet usually having some of the same, come to constitute a sort of visible bond, embracing the greater part of our churches, leaguing them together ecclesiastically. I trust I am not alone in the opinion, that the time has come when this system of councils might advantageously pass into disuse. It can hardly be claimed that they accomplish any good or prevent any evil. When has a council ever in our day restored harmony and peace between a minister and his people, or between one portion of a congregation and another, when disaffection has existed? When or where, in our time, has an ordaining council ever been the means of protecting a parish against the induction of an unworthy or unsuitable minister? When has such a council ever ventured to depart from a mere formal and meaningless routine, and to claim and exercise some real ecclesiastical authority, without getting into inextricable confusion of opinion, and ending in doing nothing beyond the empty formalities of business? There have been cases, in which the moral unfitness of the

candidate has been known to members of the ordaining council, and yet the ordination has proceeded without objection; so strange and unpleasant, and probably ineffectual, would it have been to interfere and advise the parish to retrace their steps. The usual ordination services are appropriate and useful, and need not be omitted where they are desired; for individual ministers, acquainting themselves with the candidate, and being personally satisfied as to his fitness for the ministry, may perform those services, for aught that appears, as well without organizing themselves into council as with, — not as representing certain churches, but as individuals, alone responsible for their own acts. It has always been well understood that it is the act, not of the council, but of the parish, that constitutes the validity of the pastoral relation. A council, therefore, answers no important end. When it does nothing, its business proceedings have too much the aspect of needless formality; and when any of its members propose that something be really done, discord and defeat are the usual results. If councils should become infrequent among us, and finally cease to be called, I cannot see how we should lose any definable good. We should be rid of one source and scene of unprofitable altercation; and, what is more important, should be rid of one of the things that help to keep us in a false position ecclesiastically, and to make us so far a sect in outward show as to involve us in some inconsistency, and a sect in reality just far enough to produce some of the internal mis-

understanding and disaffection incident to a sect, and none of the benefits.

I may notice, in the same connection, ministerial associations; — I mean those which are composed of the pastors of certain churches as such, in their official capacity, — they and their successors for ever. Such an association becomes, in the eye of the public, the organ and representative body of those churches, expresses their unity, and is regarded as the index of those views on religious subjects in which those churches are presumed to agree. With our principles of free inquiry, there must arise in such an association great differences of views, perhaps differences that are vital in the minds of some. Different members may find themselves at opposite points of the compass on subjects deemed very important. Now, if they were merely so many individual ministers, meeting together informally, as other people meet, in mutual respect and toleration, to discuss those matters, to get one another's light, to encourage one another in their professional studies and duties, and strengthen their personal friendships, it would be harmless, nay, a beautiful and excellent thing. But, being associated in an official and representative character, they naturally feel that they and their churches are, in some manner, held responsible by the public for one another's opinions. Being an ecclesiastical unit, they are considered by the public as agreeing substantially in opinion, or as deeming those matters unimportant on which they differ. Hence, a false position, and frequent embar-

rassment, — and that without remedy; for there is nothing in the avowed principles of their association that should prevent their arriving at such contradictory opinions, — no standard, and can be none, by which to try any one, no ground on which any member can be excluded without gross inconsistency, and no ground on which any member ought to feel obliged to withdraw himself, as long as he remains the accepted pastor of a church belonging to that ecclesiastical circle. Such a position is unfavorable to good fellowship; and it is unfavorable to the cause of truth. For perhaps some members, dreading the scandal of a controversy among the members of the same ecclesiastical family, will forbear to make known their individual convictions, or to controvert what they regard as the false and pernicious opinions of others, when, as free and honest men, they ought to do it. Or, in their eagerness to disavow a responsibility for one another's opinions, which they know that the public, however mistakingly, will charge upon them, perhaps they assail the obnoxious views, or defend their own opposite ones, with a forwardness, a warmth, a bitterness, more than enough. Hence, perhaps, personal alienations, bad temper, and social disruptions, arising from the alleged or constructive ecclesiastical unity. It is impossible for men who stand together in a false position to do just right by one another, or by the truth. The only way is to correct that position. It would seem that all the benefits of such associations might be secured and fully enjoyed, if their representative character were removed, and they were

made really and visibly unofficial, with no reference to the churches with which the members may be connected.

The American Unitarian Association, so called, is not liable to the same objection, inasmuch as there is nothing in its constitution that would prevent any Christian from joining it, whatever his theological opinions; and inasmuch as its members do not come into it as representatives of churches, but as individuals, ministers, and laymen, from far and near, from various churches and from no churches, as the case may be. It has, according to its articles, no ecclesiastical or denominational character. There is something not quite right in theory, perhaps, in having a series of publications, selected by a committee, and purporting to speak, understood to speak, in the name and in behalf of a whole community of Christians, among whom there is great diversity of opinion on many subjects. I am not aware that any practical evils have yet arisen as to the Tracts; and if evils shall appear hereafter, some change can easily be made. Religious publications, by whomsoever circulated, should be, as really and as manifestly as possible, the works and exponents of individual minds.*

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* I have no wish to see the American Unitarian Association dissolved. A better name might, perhaps, be given to it; but that is a secondary matter. I certainly would not wish it dissolved, nor any of its activity remitted, until the wisdom of many shall have devised and approved some better means for diffusing liberal principles, and for aiding and encouraging any feeble churches with which its members may have sympathy. The excellent zeal for freedom, truth, and holiness, which now finds scope for

Our semi-annual Conventions — in their present character of mere social gatherings, discussing all subjects freely, all the members coming in and going out uncommitted, not voting by majorities that this or that matter of opinion is settled thus or so — are productive of many benefits and satisfactions, as we know, and of no apparent evils.* If they shall come to assume a representative and ecclesiastical character, they will help to fix us in a false position, — to make us a denomination in form, when we cannot be one in reality.

Besides the system of ecclesiastical councils and representative associations, which bind us by subtle ties in a sort of denominational alliance, just sufficient to produce some inconsistency and embarrassment, without giving us the coherency and strength of a genuine and well compacted sect, which we never were, and which it is growing more and more impossible for us to be, — besides these, there still lingers among us, at the bottom of those things, and of much

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its exercise in the doings of that Association, should not be diverted from that channel of influence, until it find a broader and better one. No better one has yet been suggested. It is enough that the character and action of the Association (it is so constituted) will be modified at any future period by the views held by our people, at the time, respecting their true position and interests as Christians and among Christians.

* At the Convention in New York last autumn, there were present members of at least three different denominations, all taking part in the deliberations, none of them compromising their peculiar opinions, but sitting and conferring together in unbroken harmony, and with mutual respect and edification. That Convention could not be called a sectarian body. We came away from it wiser, better, happier, and no whit more sectarian in feeling or purpose.

else, a remnant of the old ecclesiastical feeling belonging to other times and a different state of things.

There is a vague feeling that individual ministers cannot stand alone; that they must have an official relation to one another, must be banded together in some sort of recognized league, and constitute a clerical body politic, in order to sustain one another, to present a goodly front to the world, and keep up the respectability and influence of their office. It is enough to say of this feeling, that it is only a feeling, a faint shadow from old and obsolete realities. I think it would be difficult to show how any minister among us obtains any official strength or consequence, except what he may derive from the confidence and appreciation of his own parish, together with such influence with the public at large as his personal talents, and character, and strength of position at home, may give him. His social intercourse with men of the same profession is very important to him, and the more of such intercourse the better; but that intercourse does not require the formation of public official relations, but is rather hindered and cramped by them.

There is a feeling, too, that our separate churches cannot be merely so many separate churches, independent, each doing its own business, and its members associating with the members of other churches for social, religious, or benevolent purposes, according to affinities or circumstances; but that there must be some sort of bond, however trivial, and hardly felt or noticed by the churches themselves,—some bond, formal or implied, that shall combine them in a nominal unity,

a kind of general church, which amounts to a sect, — a feeble imitation of what is found on a large scale in the church of Rome. The Protestant churches have never been sufficiently weaned from their old mother of Rome, nor have we been. Among other errors from that source which are still extant is this idea, that there must be, in order to a proper unity, a general church, composed of many separate churches. I know not what good ground there is for that idea. I know of no legitimate idea of a church but these two: first, any local association of believers organized as any one of our churches is, for the purpose of promoting religious objects among themselves and around them; and second, that ideal, invisible church, which embraces all true followers of Christ, wherever scattered through space or time, — an undefined church, universal, catholic. All attempts to realize an idea of a church between these two have failed as to the object proposed, namely, a real unity, and have been a fruitful source of sectarian discord, uncharitableness, and oppression. It has always been so in the church of Rome, notwithstanding its alleged unity. It has been so more or less in all Protestant denominations, our own inclusive. This idea still lingers among us to our harm.

Closely related to the ecclesiastical idea just considered is this other, — the idea, that we ought to be able to determine who is to be regarded as a Christian believer, and who is not, — that there must be some test, by appealing to which we may pronounce that

this or that person is to be recognized as a Christian, or that he is not,—and that it is quite essential to the interests of Christianity in the world, that we should come at such a test and apply it, and decide in any given case whether a man or a class of men is entitled to the Christian name or not.

Many of our members doubtless think it desirable and important that we should come to some general agreement as to such test, by which we may limit in some uniform and accredited manner, as liberal as may be, yet as definite as may be, the application of the term Christian, so that we may not include or recognize as belonging to our denomination any persons who, by such a test, are excluded from the category of Christian believers. And certainly a Christian denomination ought not to recognize infidels as belonging to it, if it can find a test by which they may be justly declared to be infidels. If we are in future to take a more rather than a less denominational character, it would seem to be necessary for us to draw some lines by which we may guard ourselves from an ecclesiastical union with infidels. The ecclesiastical feeling, of course, moves us to seek such a test, impresses upon us the necessity of it. No measure towards establishing such a test has yet been broached among us, but the general subject has been discussed among us, producing some conflict and perplexity of opinion. Before we think of adopting any test of that kind, and before we put ourselves into a position which will make it necessary, we ought to consider well how difficult it must be to find any (even if we could agree) which

would be at once just to others, and consistent with our own liberal principles in its application. Tests which have been hitherto tried among other Christians have not worked well, and those which have been suggested among ourselves are not free from objections. We may notice some of them.

The High Churchman says, Assent to the decisions of the Episcopal authorities, the Church, and conform to its ritual, and we pronounce you a Christian, and cannot otherwise. Of course, one half of the professed followers of Christ are by this test nominally excluded from the fold of Christ.

The Presbyterians have drawn up a series of doctrinal articles which they believe are taught in the Scriptures, and those who will assent thereto, for substance, are the only Christians they can recognize. This test bears hard upon those who cannot find those doctrines in the Scriptures.

To come nearer home, some will state the matter thus: If you admit Christianity as a religion supernaturally proved, if you hold that the divinity of Christ's mission and teachings is authenticated by the miraculous acts performed in attestation of it, then we call you a Christian; otherwise, not. But there are men in all lands, and I presume in all sects, who reply, that the argument from miracles is not the ground of *their* faith in Christ, does not add any strength to *their* convictions that he was a divine messenger, and yet they believe that he was such, and honor and love him and trust in him with all their hearts, — believe Christianity on other grounds. It is a hard sentence which

pronounces that they must not be called Christians, when they *are* Christians by earnest profession, and perhaps by many signs recognized by all minds.

Some would be disposed to say, Lay your hand upon the Bible and profess that you believe all that is declared as truth and fact in that volume, and you are a Christian believer; otherwise, not. But then, inasmuch as almost all Christians, both among ourselves and other denominations, do make *some* discriminations between one book of the Bible and another, or between one passage and another, the test becomes of too vague a character to be conveniently applied either by ourselves or others. The case of those persons who, on philosophical grounds, arbitrarily deny the whole class of facts which involve a supernatural agency will be considered a little farther on.

Other persons maintain that character is the only legitimate test by which to bestow or withhold the Christian name. If a man has the Christian character, they say, and leads a Christian life, and manifests a Christian spirit, we pronounce him a Christian; if not, we pronounce him no Christian. This is the most impracticable, unwarrantable, and mischievous test of all, — considered as an *ecclesiastical* test, to be openly applied. It is the one of all others that we cannot apply wisely, and have no right to apply. As a test to be adopted by a denomination, and therefore to be publicly applied, it involves a moral adjudication which we have no right to exercise with regard to our fellowmen. It implies a power to scrutinize motives, and read the heart, which we do not possess, and which

it is often criminal to assume. It is unjust to others, and depraving in its influence on our own souls, to exercise it. Hardly any man is so bad, as not to have some Christian traits in some degree; and none is so good, as to possess them all, or any of them in perfection. Where shall we draw the visible line, dividing the sheep from the goats? and who authorized us to draw it anywhere? and what interests of truth or humanity require that it should be drawn anywhere? An individual Christian will, of course, have in his mind his own ideal of the truly and thoroughly Christian character, and in the privacy of his own thoughts he will measure by that standard the moral and spiritual attainments and deficiencies of one and another among those with whom he is acquainted. He will determine that this or that trait, action, or course of life is Christian or unchristian. And character (taking that term in its broadest sense) we all believe is the standard by which the one holy and omniscient Being judges his accountable creatures. But this standard cannot be set up as the one whereby to give or withhold the Christian name in such a definite way as to determine public, visible, ecclesiastical relations. We speak loosely, when we talk of an extended public relation as a thing to depend on a test so variable, so much a matter of degrees, a matter of so much delicacy, and so wholly out of the reach of our public cognizance, as personal character.

It will be admitted that it would be inconsistent with our principles to exclude from our denomination, if we are to be one strictly, any man or set of men

desiring to belong to it, on any other ground than this, — that they virtually reject the essentials of Christianity, and are to be regarded and declared as not being Christians, not entitled to the name. I think it is our theory, that any one desiring to be of us may be so, and may come into all ecclesiastical relations with us, unless we are obliged to deny him to be a Christian believer. This is the theory; and it exposes us to difficulty on two sides; — first, in regard to those who add to the gospel so much extraneous matter, as, in our opinion, to smother and neutralize the Christian truth which they admit; — secondly, those who subtract so much from the history, authority, and instructions of Jesus Christ, as, in our opinion, not to leave enough to constitute any consistent and well grounded Christianity at all.

On the one side, many would say of the Roman Catholics, and some would say of genuine old-school Calvinists, that the former encumber Christianity with many fantastic rites, much that is Jewish in form and heathenish in origin, many things foreign to the nature and spirit of Christ's simple and spiritual religion; and that the latter connect with Christianity a series of metaphysical doctrines, which is not only not a part of it, but is so much at variance with it, that, in being made prominent, it presents the gospel under a false and foreign aspect; so that the system, with all its superadditions to the truth, does not, on the whole, exhibit Christianity, cannot be taken as a tolerable statement of Christ's religion, — is not Christianity. What shall we say of persons holding these systems

of faith? We cannot for a moment think of denying them the Christian name. They cling to Christ firmly in reverent love. They rest their hopes of salvation upon him. Whole hosts of them, from among the living and the dead, rise up to mind, shining bright with all the lustre of Christian righteousness, purity, and love, and themselves referring all that they are, and all that they hope for, to Christ. Our tongues would be palsied in the effort to pronounce them personally to be no Christian believers. We call them Christians, as they claim to be, — Christians, in spite of the alleged errors of their systems. Now, if any persons, ministers, or churches, holding those systems, wished to join our denomination, and so become identified with us, what should we do? According to our theory, we should receive them, inasmuch as we do not deny them to be Christians. But, by receiving them, and holding such ecclesiastical relations with them as to signify that they belong to our denomination as fully as any of us do, we should declare to the world that we consider their errors of belief to be unimportant, when, in fact, many of us believe those errors are so many and great, that, being made thus prominent, they overshadow and put out of sight the genuine gospel of Christ. We could not, as true men, receive them as holding and teaching substantially what we hold and teach as Christianity. And yet, according to our theory, we should be bound to receive them, and cordially welcome them, and give them free course and furtherance in spreading their doctrines in our name, as much as we did our other members. What should we do?

What could we do, consistently? I cannot tell. Let those answer who hold that we ought to be thoroughly a denomination. It is true, we have at present no practical difficulties in this direction; but any unsound theory is sure to lead to practical difficulties sooner or later.

On the other side are the Rationalists, — that class of them of whom the German Dr. Strauss is usually considered the father and representative. They subtract from Christianity, they brand as falsehood and fable, a large class of facts, — all the supernatural facts, — recorded as real in the four Gospels. They strike out every alternate link in that chain of New Testament history by which alone we arrive at any knowledge of Christ's actions, character, and instructions. They thus discredit the witnesses and the records through which alone they can pretend to derive any knowledge of Christ or Christianity. It is not apparent to others what ground they have left to themselves for maintaining that Christ did or said any of the things attributed to him in those books, every other page of which, according to them, records a myth or a fiction. What shall we say of such persons? Most of us think — I, for one, certainly think — that they have rejected so much that relates to Christ, his history, claims, and instructions, that they are illogical and intellectually inconsistent in retaining what they do retain of Christianity. But then they do, in fact, however illogically, believe that Christ was a real personage, and that his character and teachings are known and well authenticated,

and that a considerable part of those teachings are divine truth. And if they believe thus, whether on any good grounds or not, and accept Christ as their religious head, in the sense in which they think he desired to be head; and if they profess to feel for Christ such love and reverence as they think he meant to claim; and if they, therefore, desire and claim to bear his name, and as a class manifest the usual degree of sincerity, — what shall we do? Shall we distinctly deny them the Christian name, or not? I think we are not prepared to declare explicitly, that they personally are not Christians, are not to be called Christians, when they think that they are Christians, say that they are by every preference of their hearts, and by every conviction of their minds. It would be hard to demand that men should be good logicians, in order to wear uncontradicted the Christian name. We accord that name to the Roman Catholics, and we should not withhold it even from the benighted church of Abyssinia, though they do add to Christianity such crushing mountains of extraneous matter; and why is not addition as bad for the truth as subtraction? * And if we do not deny explicitly the

* Dr. Dewey (than whom there is no man I oftener agree, and love to agree, with), in his Address delivered before the Berry Street Conference, in May last, in which we find a strong expression of the opinion, that Rationalists should not be called Christians, says as follows: — "I have heard more than one man say, that he would rather be an infidel than a Calvinist, a strict Calvinist of the old school; and I must confess *that* is my judgment. That is to say, I can better get along with the difficulties of the infidel system, — which, observe, is not atheism, nor universal unbelief, not a rejection of natural religion, but only of a revela-

Christian name to those serious Rationalists who claim it, then, according to our theory, we cannot exclude them from our denomination, if they desire to be connected with it. But then, if we receive them and own them, and enter into all ecclesiastical relations with them (unless we make such a protest as is equivalent to a decided exclusion of them), we sanction their fatal subtractions, and give countenance and currency to opinions which we think undermine Christianity, and must subvert it in more logical minds, although it may not have subverted it in theirs. As honest men, we cannot do this, cannot enter into such ecclesiastical or denominational relations with them as to show that we regard them as one with us on the important points of Christianity. What, then, should we do? How shall we reconcile our denominational theory with our honesty as men, and our fidelity to Christian truth? I know not what answer will be given to this question by those who hold that we ought to be a defined, compact, and homogeneous

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tion, — I say, I can better get along in my own mind with the difficulties of this system, than I can with that of Calvin; embracing the damnation of infants, actual or deserved, and the just exposure from Adam's sin of all men to that doom. I may be wrong, but that is my opinion."

I presume that Dr. Dewey would not put Rationalism below infidelity. I presume he does not deny the Christian name to Calvinists. Can he, then, in perfect consistency, withhold it from the Rationalists, who, in his opinion, come nearer to truth, that is, Christianity, than the Calvinists do? Both profess Christianity alike, both claim the Christian name alike; can he admit the claim of those who are farthest from genuine Christianity, and yet deny the same claim on the part of those who, of the two sets of claimants, come the nearest to genuine Christianity?

denomination, like other denominations. I should answer it by saying that we ought not to be such a denomination, and ought to dispense with those ecclesiastical usages and ties which tend to make us such a denomination either in fact or appearance, — ought to put ourselves in such a position, that we cannot, by any fair inference or construction, be held in the slightest degree responsible for one another, as individuals or as a body; and then, as we should have no occasion to admit or ecclesiastically recognize any man or set of men, so we should have no occasion either to exclude any, or to receive them with grudges and protests more ungracious than exclusion itself. We should be in a position to accord the Christian name, at least so far as to forbear denying it, to any who seriously assume it, and that without being in any way committed to their errors, however great, — free to expose and controvert those errors, whether of addition or subtraction, not undertaking to say how much error of either kind shall in any case take the Christian name from a man who thinks that he has faith in Christ.

Profession, with the reasonable appearance of sincerity, cannot be disregarded in the public and extended relations of this life. It is but Christian courtesy, and a decent respect for the opinions and feelings of others, to concede to them the Christian name, if they claim it and value it, — to concede it, at the very least, by that silent acquiescence which means that we do not feel called upon to decide upon the validity of such a claim. By such concession, whether silent

or explicit, we do not certify that they hold the Christian faith in its purity or entireness, or on its true grounds, or on any sufficient grounds, or separate from errors which go to mask its genuine features or neutralize its value; nor that they have the spirit of Christ, or walk according to his truth. Let any man take the Christian name who will, and take it on his own responsibility, as we all must. We may not judge the heart, — there is one that judgeth. Whoso takes that name must settle for himself the one solemn and vital question, whether he wears it so rightfully and worthily, that the Master, to whom alone he standeth or falleth, will own him in the last day. The name, by whomsoever conceded, cannot open to us the gate of heaven, nor hide a single sin from the sight of God.

I am driven to the conclusion, that ecclesiastical arrangements, such as I have referred to under a previous head of this discourse, are not wanted for the purpose of restricting the application of the Christian name; and that our denomination, since its theory requires only that name as a condition of membership, is by those arrangements already involved in, and must always be liable to, embarrassing and inextricable inconsistencies. It would be well to have our denominational theory brought into harmony with our ecclesiastical bonds and customs; and I see no better means to this end, than to give up as many of the latter as have become nugatory and needless.

I hardly change the topic in passing to the remark, that a good deal of the ecclesiastical feeling which we inherit from Rome, and which still survives to hamper and perplex us, hangs about the term *fellowship*. There is a vague feeling, that there must be a sort of technical church-fellowship among Christians, — that we must keep up some ecclesiastical relations for the sake of that fellowship, — must constitute ourselves a denomination, in order that we may have that fellowship with one another, which is denied us with other denominations. A denominational existence implies some conditions of fellowship. The absence of such conditions, or an indefiniteness about them, brings confusion and anarchy into a denomination; and to establish them and make them definite involves difficulties always great, and, with us, apparently insuperable.

It were almost to be wished that that good word, Fellowship, could be stricken out of our language; for, while it remains, it seems all but impossible to get rid of the false ideas which it perpetuates, or to get out of the false position in which it places us. We cannot, indeed, spare the *thing* fellowship; we would rather create or restore it, if possible. But we can spare those things which have hitherto had the effect to pervert or destroy it, as a bond of love and harmony among the professing disciples of a common Master, whose leading commandment to his disciples was, that they should love one another. Our Lord earnestly enjoined upon his followers that they should be closely united by the tie of a common faith. The apostles

established such arrangements and rules in the churches which they planted, as they deemed, under the peculiar circumstances of the case, most favorable to the strength, unity, and peace of those churches, — the fellowship which their Lord inculcated. In taking a survey of Protestant Christendom, we immediately see that those ecclesiastical bonds and rules which the several denominations have adopted, by which to establish, restrict, and regulate Christian fellowship, have had the effect to divide the members of Christ's body from one another, and to produce sectarian antagonism, — the opposite of that oneness which Christ enjoined. And as to the internal condition of the several sects, the incurable strifes and divisions going on within their respective communions plainly show that their ecclesiastical regulations, which establish a nominal fellowship among their members, are very far from producing a real fellowship, but rather hinder it, and make it impracticable. As a means of producing the oneness among Christians which Christ desired, they are a failure, and that failure is in daily process of a more complete demonstration. It is becoming evident, I think, that the Protestant denominations, in order to promote a true Christian oneness or fellowship, must have either more ecclesiastical bonds and partitions, or fewer, — rules either more stringent, or less so. The effect of having more in number, or more stringent ones, may be learned from the history of the church of Rome, with all the outrages upon human rights and Christian charity which that history brings to view. That way will not be tried again. Mankind will not

bear it again. The opposite way must be tried. And why should it not be tried? Why should not *we* try it, — we who have already gone farther in that direction than most others, and found great advantage in doing so? Why should not we keep on in the right way, as fast and as far as we can, and remove any of those merely ecclesiastical bonds which, while they establish a nominal and formal fellowship, do not produce a real oneness among ourselves or our fellow-Christians, but only plague us with inconsistencies, and, as far as they go, distort and mystify the free and genuine sentiment of Christian friendship, and of universal brotherly kindness?

We want Christian fellowship, — all we have of it, and a thousand times more. Let every real expression of it be retained. But why should any expression of it be technical, official, *ecclesiastically* ordered and limited? I can gladly give the Right Hand of Fellowship to another, a brother entering the ministry, simply in token that I have personal confidence in him as a Christian man and teacher, and that I am glad to meet him at the threshold, and say a friendly word of welcome and encouragement. But why should I do it officially? by what necessity? for what use to the minister, or to the church, or to Christianity? If I should ever have occasion hereafter to perform that part in an ordaining service, I will do it, not ecclesiastically, not in the name of the council or of any definite number of churches, but in my own behalf, and in behalf of all persons or churches, present or absent, of the council or not of it, who may sympa-

thize with me in the act. It would be well that all relations of an official and ecclesiastical kind, subsisting among clergymen, should cease; and this, not that they may be thrown apart and isolated, but that their relations to one another may be more real and spontaneous, more legitimate and extended, more independent and unencumbered, more cordial, and more Christian.

This false notion of fellowship, which I am opposing, has got itself mixed up with the subject of ministerial exchanges, — the exchange of pulpits, — and so begets misunderstandings. There is a vague notion, for instance, that I am officially in fellowship with those whom I invite into my pulpit; and that I decline, perhaps explicitly renounce, such fellowship with those whom I do not so invite. This is an unfounded and injurious construction. Exchanges are not an ordinance of God; they are casual incidents, occurring a few times in a year, for mutual and personal convenience, and, of course, with a very few persons, — various circumstances besides a presumed general agreement on the important points of belief, often accidents, determining with whom they are made. In my own mind, I no more establish a peculiar and technical fellowship with the twenty men, more or less, whom I choose or happen to exchange with, than I exclude from such fellowship the twenty thousand whom I do not happen or choose to exchange with. I recognize no such fellowship or exclusion from fellowship in either case. Let this false notion of ministerial fellowship,

which I am objecting to, be discountenanced and put away, and the misunderstanding will cease.

The term *fellowship*, if it could be divested of the ecclesiastical ideas that have so long darkened and superseded its true meaning, would be a most expressive and comprehensive Christian word. Love is the one Christian law. The whole tendency of Christianity is to draw men together, and bind them together as brethren. Christian men cannot keep apart. Wherever the spirit of Christ comes, there men learn to see eye to eye, mind answereth to mind, and heart to heart. There can be no cold self-seeking, self-sufficing individualism among true Christians. By the influence of Christian love, the sympathies of men meet in hallowed confluence, and unite them in one brotherhood. By Christian communion, the strength of one, the light, the trust, the piety, and peace of one, become the strength, and light, the trust, piety, and peace of many. The Christian religion and human fellowship are two inseparable things, not to be divided. An unsocial religion cannot claim a gospel stamp or origin. I object to the arbitrary, artificial, ecclesiastical fellowship, because, among other mischiefs, it obstructs the genuine Christian fellowship. False relations, accompanied, as they must be, by false separations, necessarily stand in the way of real relations. Merely nominal bonds hinder the growth of those vital and wholesome ones which we desire to have strengthened and extended.

There are many modes of the legitimate Christian fellowship. They run into each other, and can hardly be

defined separately. There is the fellowship which may exist among members of the same church or congregation, that is, just such fellowship as may naturally arise among those who statedly worship and commune together. There is a sphere for Christian fellowship among those who are drawn together either from a single church or from among many churches, and are moved to act together in one spirit, to kindle each other's devotion, confirm each other's faith, to provoke one another to good works; or to devise liberal things for the poor and the ignorant, for the oppressed and forsaken, for the widow and the fatherless, for the erring and the lost; or to send forth the living messenger, and the written word, that shall impart to others the blessings of that truth which they themselves agree in and rejoice in as the light of their own souls. There is a Christian fellowship that hallows virtuous friendship and love, and in the private relations of life unites according minds by ties more sacred than those of selfish interest and the worldly mind. There is a Christian fellowship which consists in the sentiments of sympathy and brotherly good-will, which it becomes every Christian to feel, and to exercise as he has opportunity, towards all men, whatever their belief, character, or position, simply as his fellow-men, whom it is his duty and his privilege to cheer, gladden, and assist, in whatever way he can. And, finally, there is that wider, higher, spiritual fellowship, which it is the privilege of every Christian to claim, and rejoice in, with all the good in all ages, all who can guide him by their wisdom, inspire him by their example, purify him by

their purity, and lift up his spirit by the elevation of their own. This is a fellowship which all may have, who have the heart to appreciate and desire it. This is a fellowship which is intersected by no denominational lines. It is established by no ecclesiastical ties, and is dissolved by no ecclesiastical ruptures. It is no arbitrary relation. It is a fellowship that passes unimpeded round the world, and is transmitted unbroken through the ages. Its free gifts are spiritual light, and moral power and impulse, kindly guidance and helpfulness, and clear and holy benefactions and enjoyments, which hierarchies cannot intercept, nor sects fence in, which time cannot limit, nor death itself cut off.

The denominational and ecclesiastical feeling which yet lingers among us is associated with the idea, that some sort of ecclesiastical union, formal or implied, is necessary for the maintenance and propagation of Christian truth, — the truth, either as opposed to errors which we may think other sects have incorporated with it, or as opposed to speculations of various kinds, which we may think subversive of the very foundations of Christianity.

As to the first of these points, it is very questionable whether such means are necessary to the desired end, or are likely to promote it, taking the whole field and a long period into view. Any one, looking carefully over the history of our denomination for the last thirty or forty years, will perceive, I think, that we do not owe our strength in any considerable degree to any of

those usages or movements which have tended to give us boundaries as a sect. Judging from the force and numbers of any visibly organized array which we are able to present, we appear to be one of the weakest denominations in New England; whereas, in point of influence in the organization of society, and in shaping the general course of thought, we are one of the strongest, as is manifest from many signs. We have never been statistically great. Our strength lies in the sympathy which our more free and rational, though somewhat indefinite theology, finds among intelligent and influential men scattered all through the community, many of them having nothing to do with us as a denomination, and liking every thing about us better than our slight sectarian aspect, — attracted to us partly by our comparative freedom from the position and trammels of a sect. The great controversies, which made us, theologically, a permanent, respectable, and influential portion of the Christian family, were carried on at a period when we were less a defined denomination than we have been since, and by men singularly individual in their position, having little or nothing to do with us as a defined denomination. And now if we were to dissolve every denominational bond, and disclaim all ecclesiastical relations except those existing within each separate church, what harm would ensue? Wherein should we be weakened? What tongue would be silenced among us thereby? What page in our religious and theological literature would be blotted, or be left unwritten, on that account? What pulpit would be closed? What church scattered or

thinned? What channel of influence would be barred against us, however it might be changed a little in its shape and direction? What tie of Christian sympathy would be broken? What charitable agency, combined or individual, need be stopped? What source of real strength, what means of *Christian* union, would be cut off?

If we had a definite creed, then a denominational existence, with its various ecclesiastical bonds and machineries, would be suitable, and perhaps necessary. But we cannot have such a creed; and if we could, the setting of it up would be such a departure from our principles, as to hurt our self-respect, and subject us to the deserved reproaches of others. It is to be hoped that few among us desire a written and definite creed. There are, indeed, some persons, imperfectly acquainted with us, who, thinking they have an affinity for us, and who, from always living among sects, have not yet risen to a conception of the possibility of being a Christian man, or a Christian church, without wide ecclesiastical relations, definite standards, a denominational union, and an aggressive array, — there are some such who desire to know where we stand, demand to know where to find us. And it is a common complaint among those who dislike and oppose us, that they do not know where to find us. But they cannot be informed where to find *us*. — Us! there is no US in any corporate sense, and it was never meant that there should be; I pray God there never may be. We properly consist of a scattered and indefinite number of free minds and free churches, all forming their

opinions for themselves, and not anxious to make them conform to those of the rest. No man or set of men is competent or authorized to speak for the whole, or for the majority of us. If you wish to know where to find any given individual preacher or writer, you can ascertain; but you will never know where to find *us*. Our strength lies in our freedom and diffusiveness, and we are and shall be weakened just to the degree in which we become compacted into a denominational position, and fettered by ecclesiastical ties and relations.*

And now as to the other point, — that ecclesiastical union is important, as a means of powerfully discountenancing and checking the incursion and spread of any speculations which, most of us may think, strike a blow at the foundations of Christianity.

No ecclesiastical power or influence has ever been able to stop such speculations, either those which have been designedly or in their tendency hostile to Christianity, or those which have in the end proved favorable to the purification and spread of Christianity. The

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* The history of sects in past times may not seem to sustain me in the position, that we shall flourish better without a general ecclesiastical union. The Wesleyan Methodists organized, and they are strong and prosperous. The Whitefieldians did not organize, and they are now unknown. The English Unitarians, in the last century, gave up ecclesiastical union, without the success that might have been hoped for. I am not staggered by such facts. We do not know all the circumstances under which those denominations began or carried on their various measures. In making such comparisons, we are likely to leave out some important circumstances that determined the result. We do know our own circumstances, and can take them all into account, and they are such as lead me and many others to maintain the doctrine of this discourse.

latter have gone on in spite of ecclesiastical opposition; and the former have come to an end, but not by ecclesiastical means. The church of Rome has frequently had to deal with speculations of the latter kind, — those which have resulted well for the cause of the pure gospel, — but, with all her spiritual enginery, and with the secular arm to help her, she could never stop them. She pronounced Huss, and Jerome of Prague, to be enemies of the faith. She could set public opinion against them; she could launch a terrible excommunication against them; she could kill them; but she could not stop them. They went on all the more, and their principles and their influence still remain and go on. She thought Luther an enemy of the faith, but she could not stop him; she could not even kill him; and his influence now pervades the civilized world. She liked not the speculations of the Huguenots of France. She could enact St. Bartholomew scenes upon them; but she could not stop them; they are going on yet. She sees no friend of Christianity in John Ronge, but she cannot stop him. No hierarchy, and no denomination, has ever been able to stop its speculators, and they have all had occasion to try. The old Congregational order of New England could not stop us. They could cut us off from fellowship with the majority, but they could not stop us. We are still going on.

On the other hand, all those reforming vagaries and philosophical movements which have been really hostile to Christianity, whatever may have been the true or the avowed design of them, — and such have arisen

in every age, — have been stopped, indeed, but not by ecclesiastical action or influence. They have sometimes fallen from their own flimsiness; or, when they have been strong, like the English Deism of the last century, or the French Atheism that followed it, strong and able to maintain a long and hard struggle, they have yielded at last, not to the stern anathemas or the kindly persuasions of any church establishment as such, but to those wants and sympathies that plead for religion in the heart of the world, and to that power of truth which resides in the crown of no hierarch, nor in the vote of any synod or sect, but which visits, one by one, the free and individual minds of those who seek her earnestly, and love her beauty, and welcome her sway.

Very faint, indefinite, and indirect must be the hindrance which we could or would, by any ecclesiastical action or influence, set against the progress of the speculations which, from time to time, arise among us and around us, with the appearance of a design or a tendency to subvert the gospel. We cannot stop them. And why should we wish to exercise against them any such influence, however gentle and subtile, or even inferential? We do not wish it, — if we define our own thought to ourselves, we must find ourselves too consistent to wish it. They will stop of themselves, as soon as they ought to stop. Let us have perfect confidence in the truth, and have no fear of leaving it, as far as human agency is concerned, to free, unbacked discussion between man and man. Whatever novel speculations arise, that, according to receiv-

ed ideas and our own best judgments, are subversive of the gospel, — let any man, who is moved thereto, oppose and controvert them, bravely, honestly, heartily, as he loves truth. This is the way to test them fairly. If any of them should prove to have an element of truth in them, it will thus be brought out, made apparent, and secure its rightful place in the general mind; and if they have no such element, they will not stand the contest long, and the crown of truth will be the brighter for their having arisen and fallen. Such of them, if any, as shall prove in the end to be compatible with a faith in Christianity, as the saving truth, God's own revelation, have a right to exist and go on; for we may be sure there are minds that will find in them a supply of their spiritual wants, and thus the triumphs of Christianity will be extended. But whatever of such novel opinions, or old opinions reproduced, are actually and inherently incompatible with Christianity as divine, time and free discussion will show them to be so, and then they must pass away. They will have unsettled and misled some individual minds, — that cannot be helped, — but they must perish, and leave no permanent trace of themselves in the world. For of this one thing we may be well assured, — the entire history of all past ages confirms it, — that, whatever opinion, system, or movement is really and essentially, however covertly, or even undesignedly, hostile to the religion of Christ's gospel, it will not hurt the gospel, but must itself fall before it. That gospel is the rock which all the assaults and all the ingenuities of eighteen centuries have not moved a hair's

breadth from its eternal foundations; and there is nothing in the mental movements of the nineteenth century that threatens a severer trial of its permanence than it has undergone a hundred times before. "Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken; and on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder."

All we want, in reference to any such speculations, is such a freedom from denominational lines and ecclesiastical entanglements, that no man shall ever by an inference be held responsible for an opinion until he personally adopts it; that any man may be free to let them alone, if he will, without being subjected, by an inference even, to the charge of connivance; and free to discuss, disown, and controvert them, without being subjected to the odium of a family quarrel, or the charge of sectarian exclusiveness.

I will not attempt to go over any more ground. I have designed to show that we have no need of being a distinct and bounded denomination,—no need of any ecclesiastical relations or regulations, except such as pertain to our separate churches within themselves; that such things are incompatible with our principles; that they do us no good and considerable harm, and had better not be.

I may seem to have attributed too much consequence to those slight denominational bonds, and few unobtrusive ties and usages, which give us a semblance, so faint, of an ecclesiastical unity. I know well that these matters are insignificant, as compared

with the great subjects of truth and righteousness. Yet I cannot regard any thing as of little consequence, that involves any inconsistency, and puts us into false relations with one another or the world, — with any opinion, or institution, or man, or thing. I cannot regard any change as trivial which would have a tendency to put us into right relations, and make us consistent. There is such a dignity, serenity, and power, in holding a perfectly true position, that nothing can be called a small matter which points towards such a position.

I do not like to dwell upon it as a *duty*, to put away, as far as we can, the things which may be found to mark us a denomination, and to give us an ecclesiastical character, — not as a duty, or as the least of two sets of evils; but I would that we could see it to be a great *privilege*, that we are so situated that we can renounce them. We can do it, — we alone, perhaps, of the whole Christian world. Other denominations have their boundary lines ploughed down so deep, that they cannot readily efface them. Their various ecclesiastical relations and usages enter more or less into their very structure, and are identified with their ideas of religion itself; and they cannot throw them off at once, if they would. They must go on for years, some of them centuries it may be, enduring all the jars, collisions, perplexities, and thousandfold hindrance and mischief incident to a denominational existence.* But we, from the fortunate cir-

* "The Abolitionists have broken the national churches of the Baptists and Methodists in twain; the Presbyterians have broken by their own

cumstances of our origin and position, can throw them off. They have no necessary connection with the prosperity or multiplication of our churches, or our progress in the life of faith and godliness. Our ecclesiastical scaffolding is not fastened to our temple; not a timber of it is mortised into the walls; it gives no support at any point to the main suructure. We can throw down that scaffolding, and leave our rock-built temple unencumbered by its rubbish, undisturbed by its harsh creakings, and unmarred by its deformity. When it shall have been thrown down effectually,

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weight; and, if we may judge by appearances, the Episcopal church is in some danger of a similar result. The two Presbyterian schools have yet a North and South question on hand; and if the Abolitionists could really contrive to break all these national arrangements into a thousand pieces, in our humble judgment it would be one of the greatest blessings that could befall religion or its professors in the various denominations." This passage is taken from a long article on ecclesiastical arrangements in the New York Journal of Commerce, for March 11, a paper understood to be in Orthodox hands.

We all know that other denominations are rent and afflicted by internal differences and distractions, far greater than any that have troubled us, or than we are likely to encounter; because their denominational character is more marked, and their ecclesiastical tests and arrangements are more stringent and complex. Their troubles will not grow lighter or fewer. Every thing in the signs of the times and the character of the present age indicates that those internal troubles must increase, until the severe discipline shall have broken down all sectarian barriers and ecclesiastical assumptions, and Christians shall have arrived at last at that liberty wherewith Christ would make them free. Centuries of struggle and discord must probably intervene; but if that great consummation shall come, however dearly it may be bought, it will be worth the cost. Then, it may be, the idea of a really universal church — an idea that has always haunted Christian minds — may become possible to be realized; and a truly catholic church, whose form is not yet dreamed of, may grow up and be established in the world, and be indeed a kingdom of God on earth.

wholly, through the legitimate influence of an elevated, anti-sectarian, and truly catholic feeling prevailing amongst us, we shall occupy a position privileged above all others, — a position that, for opportunity, strength, and beauty, has not been attained or seen since that day of Pentecost when the apostles began their work.

And then, with that high and true position secured, our consistency established, our shackles wholly removed, and every provocative of discord, uncharitableness, and sectarian ambition put away, we shall be free, — each man, in his own place and sphere, unencumbered, — wholly free to do our great and appropriate work, which is, with singleness of eye and aim, to preach and promote the righteousness of Christ, righteousness and faith, piety and love, purity and peace. To renew the soul, to form the character, to meet the most immediate and real wants of the soul, to deal directly with the conscience and the heart, to forward the religion of the life, — this is our legitimate province. Every thing in our principles and our history points to this as our work. All that we believe points to this as the greatest Christian work. We can do this. We should let nothing hinder our doing this. We can do nothing else well but this. We have properly nothing to do with denominational objects or ecclesiastical regulations. We manage them poorly. They do not fit us. They belittle us. And, just to the degree in which we shall hereafter meddle with them, they will disturb our peace, fritter our strength, hamper our arms, distract our speech, divide our

thoughts, and hinder that true fellowship which is indeed the unity of the spirit. May the time soon come, — would that our own eyes might behold it! — when we shall cast aside all external encumbrances, and thenceforth know nothing but our glorious privilege to work with undivided energies within the very vineyard itself of our Lord!

CHARGE.

BY REV. N. L. FROTHINGHAM, D. D.

You request me, Sir, to address to you what is called the Charge, on this occasion. I can see no reason why I should be excused from the service. I feel no right to decline it. I might tell you that our Congregational usage does not insist upon this part of the ceremony, when a minister of the gospel, who has been ordained before, only resumes his labors in a new place. He was exhorted to be faithful to his trust, when he first assumed it; and that might seem enough. But we all need to be reminded daily; and there is certainly no objection to your choosing the manner in which these solemn exercises shall be conducted. I might say, also, that there are some peculiar circumstances connected with our position here, yours and mine, that make it difficult to perform this duty with the perfect honesty and freedom that it demands. But it would be the poorest of apologies for shrinking from any duty, that it was delicate or

hard. I will allude no further, then, to either of these considerations, except to say that they will give shape to the few words that I have now to speak. Since you have already received the general charge to be faithful as a Christian minister, I shall avoid all generalities. They would not seem suitable to this new occasion. And if there are any circumstances that give a special interest to our assembling here to-day, I shall rather speak with direct reference to them, than utter ambiguous language, or resort to timid reservations. Any expressions that may sound overearnest you will ascribe to the nature of the subject, and not to any mistrust of you.

I charge you, then, first of all, to preach Christ's Gospel in this place; — not your wisdom, but his; not your speculations, but his faith. Be the servant of his steady and everlasting truth; — not of the opinions of theorists; not of the measures of any partial combinations; not of the passions of any local or temporary strife. Be the minister of the New Testament; to enforce all its great doctrines, and diffuse its beautiful spirit among men. Do not narrow it down to the pattern of your own conceit. Do not vapor it away into loose abstractions, or heated and painted extravagances. Set forth the Christ of the Bible, and look for no other, and know of no other, — for there is no other. Preach not yourself, but him; him, the chosen and sent; him, the crucified, and risen, and ascended; him, the power and counsel, the revealed testimony and love of God; him, your master, as he said he was, or why are you here to speak in his

name? him, through whom a divinely attested religion has been transmitted to us and to our children, or what have you to do in his church? him, the way to the Father and life from the dead. I charge you, do your part to keep up this doctrine in the world; a world that is to be saved, as I believe, neither by any fierce philanthropy, however new, nor by any scoffing philosophy, however old, but by the Gospel of the Son of God. Maintain that religion, both as a belief and as an institution; as a covenant of merciful authority established between heaven and earth; as something already made, and not left for you to make, or to try what you can make of it.

Speak according to the Scriptures. Let them be your guide, for you will else be yourself but a blind one. You are set for their defence. I charge you to mark that. They are to be exposed to no disrespect and to suffer no betrayal in your hands. You are to explain their obscurer parts, as well as you can, into a just understanding. You are not to explain their clearest meanings away. Give no encouragement, by your manner of using them, to the pride of the skeptical, or the jeers of the half instructed. I do not tell you that all the parts of them have the same kind of truth, or the same degree of importance. But they are united in one series of sacred lessons; and each portion is entitled to some consideration, for what the whole is combined to express. As the hewn wood and the baked clay, that go to compose the temple of the Most High, are holy because they belong to the building, so the least of these should have

their proportions of reverence for the sake of the name that is enshrined in their sanctuary. Come to this people in the fulness of their most blessed communications. And if at any time — you will pardon me, Sir, a supposition that must be painful to you — you should be led into other and opposite views of what they contain, come no more at all. I deny to no one who claims it the Christian name, on account of whatever constructions he may put upon them. I would distinguish, as broadly as any can, his critical opinions from his religious character and moral worth. But if you find nothing in these books but an accidental collection of questionable writings, and a tissue of traditionary mistakes; if the English Deism or the German Naturalism, which are substantially the same thing, are the results of your reading in them; if the story of Jesus becomes to you but an embellished legend, with nothing of any inspired authority, and nothing out of the usual course; I then charge you to bear that witness, if you must bear it, in some other place. If religion is turned into a loose form of free-thinking or radicalism, I do not know why there should be a church over its head. It can lose itself in the universal, the absolute, the inane, without the solemnities of a ritual. It can scatter itself among the debates of the newspapers and the passions of the streets, without the help of ordinances. If a revolutionary socialism is to take the place of the regenerating Word; if mankind are to be redeemed by what a lively French professor has lately called "the gospel of Voltaire"; that is a gospel which you were not invited here to spread.

I charge you, further, to be a preacher of RIGHTEOUSNESS. Give free scope to the principle, that a good life is the great condition of acceptance with God; and inculcate it with all the pains you can bestow. While you maintain sound doctrine, insist upon the Christian virtues as the most precious fruits of doctrine. Show that you make more account of duties than of opinions. But, in doing this, do not slight the importance of correct religious persuasions. That is one of the shallowest errors of an ultra liberality. You have been ordained for the truth, as well as for virtue's sake; to hold up the promise together with the law; and, while you exhort men to obedience, to confirm them in the faith that best leads them to obey. Let your discourse prefer a practical bearing to a theoretic or controversial one. Point it at the heart and the conscience, rather than amuse with it the intellectual curiosity of men. Rebuke vice and wrong, as you see fitting occasion to do it and the right way to do it, whether they are of a public or private nature, whether they are in high or low places. Be not afraid to speak out the earnest convictions of your mind, on all subjects of social, moral, or religious duty.

You may be told that you will not be permitted to be thus guided by your sense of right; that you are to be debarred from that ministerial privilege; that you are to be exempted from that ministerial obligation; that there are some topics interdicted to you, and some offences which you must lay no hand on. Sir, I do not believe this. You do not believe it.

You would not have come to stand where you are to-day, if you had believed it. I charge you not to act as if you did believe it. Be not afraid to bear witness, earnestly and aloud, as your best convictions and feelings prompt. If your manner of doing this is intemperate, or imperious, or insulting, or in any respect unwise, you are likely to hear from it; whether you speak in one desk or another. And it is best you should. The pulpit is free; but so are the congregation. You would not contend, I suppose, for an unbridled freedom, that acknowledges no decent restraints; or for an exclusive freedom, that would leave none for others. There is an independence that aims at despotism; that, not content with its rights, becomes invasive, and would dictate to the rest of the world. I charge you, neither grasp at its power, nor submit to its pretension. This is a responsible liberty, like every other. If it exceeds the bounds of propriety, or good sense, or good temper, it will be in some way told that it does. And this, too, is as it ought to be. Discharge your duty, and take the consequences. That duty is as likely to be honored, and those consequences are as likely to be blest, here as anywhere. If they should not be, let your patience endure it. And if you should ever suffer inconvenience or annoyance from the clashing of your opinions with the opinions of other persons, I need not charge you to avoid the burlesque of applying to yourself any sacrificial language, or of assigning to yourself a place among those heroic confessors who, not clad in comfort, and protection, and popular favor, but in bloody and blazing shirts, confessed to the death.

Respect the appropriate bounds of your own province. If you esteem them too narrow for you, you have not yet succeeded in understanding them. Have a care how you turn your select work of a spiritual guide into that of a schemer and a partisan. Proclaim righteousness, — pure, impartial, universal. But the zeal of that righteousness cannot have too little in it of the earthly fire that smokes and scorches; and you will not forget the words of the Apostle James, that "the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace."

These words lead me to the last point that I wish to present. I charge you to be a minister of PEACE to this people. Bring the dispositions of it in your own breast. Send them abroad, as the wings of a dove, round the whole circle where you stand pleading in the name of the Prince of Peace. Love is the law's fulfilment and the gospel's glory. Let your discipleship be known by your overflowing measure of that. "Where strife is, there is confusion and every evil work." But "the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves." "A bishop," — and you are a bishop, so far as you are called to be an overseer of this portion of the Lord's domain, — must not be "self-willed," "no striker." By that last phrase, the Apostle means the same thing that he said just before: You must not be contentious. There are strokes of the pen and of the tongue, that are as irritating as those of the armed hand, and as inconsistent with the temper of your profession. Use

your office to unite, and not to divide; to reconcile, and not to embitter; to heal, and not to wound. Attract strangers, if you can, by the lovely grace of your doctrine and example. Take care, at least, how you estrange friends. Bring here no disposition even to inquire into past troubles. Let them go down the wind, and be no more heard of. Open no avenue, leave no room, for any new agitation to come in. Fill this temple, where you are to speak openly, — fill the paths of your ministerial walk, where your speech will be more low and confidential, — with the spirit of brotherly kindness. I charge you to have no dispute with your people. If you cannot remain without controversy, depart in good-will. If, from whatever cause, your position should become unhappy to you, or unserviceable to them, offer the resignation of your place. That is always within your competency, and can never be improper in any one. If the offer is declined, and the separation that you propose is affectionately deprecated, you will be consoled and remain; and if it is willingly accepted, it is time that you retired. I charge you to "follow after the things that make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another." Lead the flock by the waters that are at the same time living and still. Seek their nourishment in pastures that are green, for there is enough elsewhere of flints and briers. And may the great Shepherd of souls guide you and them to truth, and righteousness, and rest!

RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP.

BY REV. CHANDLER ROBBINS.

My Christian Brother,

When we are assuming the responsibilities of an arduous office, whilst, with an humble sense of our own dependence and insufficiency, we look up to Heaven and invoke its blessing, it is natural for us to turn also towards the circle of our earthly friends for encouragement and aid. And when, entering upon new and important duties with a conscientious devotedness of purpose, we can be assured not only of God's approbation, but of their sympathy, we can bend our shoulders to the heaviest yoke with confidence and hope.

If, then, my brother, your prayerful eye has watched at heaven's gate, till it has been gladdened by a vision of the Father's smile upon your present undertaking, let this fraternal grasp, and the kindly tones of human friendship, be the pledges that a company of coadjutors encircle you, and that heartfelt sympathy is at hand.

If you were now for the first time inducted into the pastoral office, it would be my duty to bid you welcome to its untried duties and rewards. But you have already had personal experience of the toils of Christ's vineyard, and of the refreshment of its shade. You have borne the burden of the laborer, and enjoyed, I trust, much of his recompense. On these subjects, therefore, you do not need that I should address you.

All that devolves upon me, on this occasion, is to bid you welcome, in the name of these assembled churches and ministers of our faith, into this new field of Christian influence, and to extend to you, especially, the friendly salutations of your brethren in the city, — with whom your intercourse will henceforth be frequent, and your relations various and intimate.

You come from another ministerial association, bringing with you the esteem of its members, retaining, I doubt not, their friendship, and unwilling wholly to sever or forget the pleasant ties which have bound you to them. To that association, also, in your person, we would extend our fraternal greetings, and renew our expressions of fellowship and love. We trust that they believe, — what you will find to be the truth, — that the interest felt by the churches in the city towards those in the country is as great, to say the least, as theirs in ours; and that nothing which affects the condition of the most secluded village congregation is regarded in the metropolis with unconcern. Let me assure you, moreover, my brother, as the result of long experience, — whatever other opinion may have been entertained or expressed, — that gentler,

kinder, and warmer hearts do not beat in any circle of professional associates, than are to be found in the ministerial fraternity that extends to you its right hand to-day. I am sure, that, if its records for the last hundred years were to be searched, that scrutiny would reveal a condition of concord, forbearance, and amity, unsurpassed, for a period of equal length, in any ecclesiastical body on earth. Nor yet has that ancient harmony altogether ceased. The spirit of love that blessed the intimacy of the fathers — now united in their heavenly glory — still lingers amongst their descendants, unwilling wholly to depart, and ever revealing its presence anew, when, for a season, it has seemed preparing to take leave.

There never was a period, when it has been more difficult, or more important, to reconcile in our feelings and intercourse the two great principles of Liberty and Love, — to maintain the latter undiminished and undiluted, without interfering with or circumscribing the former, — to allow the mind and conscience of each individual to act with entire freedom, and, amidst the unavoidable diversities of opinion which must thence arise, to keep the heart from bitterness, and the tongue from reproach. This, my brother, is the trial which is proving the strength of *our* Christian principles, and testing the temper of our charity. We believe that it is possible for the Christian, in his own heart and life, to produce and to preserve this reconciliation, — to abide this trial, — to stand this test. But it can be done only through the action of the very highest faith, and the influence of the purest love.

You will agree with me that I am indicating one of the hardest and most intricate practical problems that a Christian minister of our denomination is called upon to solve. That it is capable of solution you cannot doubt. That you, and I, and all of us, may find in the Gospels, and in communion with the spirit of Jesus, that golden rule which is the only key to its solution, and apply the same to our Christian relations and intercourse, is the best wish that could be breathed in this expression of Christian friendship, — as the accomplishment of such a wish would be the perfect realization of that holy and beautiful unity which is typified by the rite we are performing.

Yes, that holy and beautiful unity! that true Christian fellowship which is so beneficent and so lovely, — like the dew upon the mountains of Zion, and upon which the Lord commandeth the blessing! — shall we not love its idea? shall we not continually labor for its promotion? shall we not make mention of it daily in our prayers? Be it not, O, be it not amongst the little band of brethren assembled here, and amongst the churches which we represent, merely symbolized by this apostolical ceremony, and brought to mind only on these solemn occasions! — but rather let it be cherished by us all, as our glory and our defence, — let it be maintained and fostered with a sacred care, in fulfilment of Christ's dying command, and as the most pleasing sacrifice to our Father who is in heaven.

And now, my brother, I close as I began, with words of encouragement and salutation.

We bid you welcome to this important and arduous station of Christian influence and labor. Welcome to this ancient and respectable church! Welcome to this fair and favored city! Welcome to the friendship and coöperation of your brethren and kindred in the faith! Welcome, also, to the untried destiny that lies before you! And may God grant that that destiny may be a long, an unblemished, a laborious, a faithful, a successful ministry, — a ministry whose arduous commencement shall nourish a devoted spirit, and call into exercise an indomitable faith, and be consummated in extensive usefulness, — a ministry which shall be to yourself as the trial of gold, the baptism of fire, and to your people the instrument of salvation, the inspiration of godliness and peace!

And long after these hands, which we thus clasp in fellowship, shall have become cold to the pressure of human love, and this encircling company of mortal witnesses shall have vanished from the earth, like the morning cloud, may this "branch of the Lord's planting" be glorified; may coming generations be nourished by its fruit, and sheltered beneath its shade; and may the fellowship of us all be with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord!

ADDRESS TO THE PEOPLE.

BY REV. E. S. GANNETT.

THERE is a manifest propriety in the usage which of late years has grown up among us, of including in the services of ordination or installation an address to the people, who form one of the parties in the solemn transactions of the day. After the minister has been charged to be faithful to his work, and has received the expression of fraternal sympathy from the pastors and members of the churches invited to participate in the pleasures of the occasion, it seems almost necessary, to give completeness or proportion to these services, that words of counsel and congratulation should also be addressed to those in whose houses and hearts this ministry must find its field of action. You, brethren, at whose request the ecclesiastical council here convened have introduced the minister of your choice to his sacred office among you, will, therefore, receive as a fit expression of our interest in this union what it remains for me to say, in the name of this great body of churches, concerning your prospects and duties.

Let me, then, first of all, offer you our congratulation and sympathy. We congratulate you on the establishment of the Christian ministry within these walls, after a brief, but painful, interruption of its regular services. We rejoice, that, when circumstances, to which I wish to make no other allusion than as they bear an historical character, had caused a vacancy in this pulpit, you were disposed, and have been able, to prevent it from remaining an unoccupied post on the walls of our Zion. It should always be an occasion of rejoicing, when stability is given to the institutions of worship and religious instruction; and to the churches — may I not say to the inhabitants? — of this city, noted from its foundation for the regard in which it has held such institutions, it would have been a source of grief, if here they had been suffered to fall into decay. Your joy, brethren, in the import of this day's services, is our joy; interpreting them as we do, as significant of a spiritual union and a progressive sanctification.

It is on the presumption that you so understand their import, that I proceed to offer the few words of counsel which the time will allow. They must relate to your connection with your minister. It is of his duties in the relation which he holds to you that they who have addressed him have spoken, and it is of your duties in the relation which you bear to him that I may speak.

As the beginning and foundation of all the remarks I shall make, and of all that would be either pertinent or proper, I counsel you to regard this relation, which

you have voluntarily assumed, as an intimate and sacred relation. Such it is, whether you so view it or not. Your neglecting or refusing to regard it in this light will not change its character; but the benefit you shall derive from it will be affected by the judgment you shall entertain concerning it. It *is* a sacred and intimate relation, — few so intimate, none more sacred. You have chosen to create this relation; — see you that you recognize its obligations. They are not all on the side of the minister. You are bound to him, as well as he to you, by the terms of this relation. I speak not of terms specified in a written contract, by which you will be bound to pay him so much money for so much work, or to grant him such and such privileges. Mind that you are faithful to the letter of those conditions. But in fulfilling them you do not discharge your whole duty to your minister. There are duties not expressed in the contract, but implied in the relation, in regard to which you must be equally faithful.

And the first of these is, that you repose in him that confidence which shall grow out of a conviction that it is a close and sacred tie which binds you together. Treat your minister as your friend. Open your minds and hearts to him. Let him not be familiar with your faces, and a stranger to your feelings. He has a right to look into your souls and see what passes there. He has it, not because he is a minister, but because you have called him to be *your* minister. It did not belong to him two months ago; it does belong to him now. And if you now deny him the opportunity of

exercising this right, you will not only pain, but affront and defraud him. Though you should empty your purses at his feet, and your houses be as free to him as the common street, if you hide your inward experience from his eye, you will do him an injustice, while you do yourselves an injury, and the relation into which you have entered will prove a snare to your souls.

We enjoin it upon you to esteem this a spiritual relation. It entitles this Christian teacher and friend to speak to you on the most sacred subjects. He may claim the privilege of discoursing *with* you, as well as to you, of the wants and dangers of the inner life. Let him speak plainly, and do you welcome the freedom with which he may unfold the principles of divine truth in their application to yourselves. Encourage him to confer with you on your souls' position relatively to God and another world. Do not complain of the severity of his exposition of duty. If he should tell you that it is a strait gate and a narrow way that leadeth unto life, do not call him fanatical, or Orthodox, or by any other name which might express your dislike of his view of the matter, but believe what he says, and take it home to your hearts as a saying which you needed to hear.

If this mutual understanding of the relation which you hold to one another can be established between you, it will tend, more than any thing else, to make the ministry fruitful of good to you, and of satisfaction to him by whom it is exercised. With this agreed upon as the basis of your connection, you will be prepared to listen, and he to speak, according to the design of

the institution which he represents. This design is the spiritual edification of the people. The minister uses such means as he thinks most conducive to this end. Foremost among which means is preaching. One of your duties, then, is to hear him preach. "Of course," you may say, "*that* is what we have engaged him for." Well, then, carry out your purpose. Attend upon his preaching. You will not hear it, if you stay at home. You must come to "meeting," if you would know what is said in the meeting-house. And when here, listen. Do not go to sleep; there are other places enough in the world for that. Do not be thinking about your business; there is time enough on other days for that. Do not be dull and inattentive; that is uncivil. Do not carp and cavil; that is unfair. In all these ways you would treat your minister ill, but yourselves still worse.

And, that the sermon may be as a word spoken in season, listen not from curiosity, but with that seriousness of self-application which renders truth ever "a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Your relation to your minister does not cease when you are out of his sight, to be renewed only when you meet him here or in your dwellings. It imposes on you the necessity of living according to his instruction; provided, that is, you believe his instruction to be a faithful interpretation of "the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." Alike in the house of worship, and in the scenes of common life, and in seasons of peculiar trial, you must cause the word of the divine grace to take root, and grow, and bring forth

fruit, by keeping in mind the principle, that truth can become profitable to the sanctification of the soul only by the use which is made of it. You may listen every Sunday of every year of your life to such preaching as made Felix tremble, and yet, if you only listen as to a performance in sacred rhetoric, it will do you no good, — not the least. This is the great fault of our congregations, — that they accept the discourse of the preacher, not as an indication of the course which they must pursue, but as an exhibition of his views on a particular subject, which it is their office to criticise, rather than to reduce to practice. The notion, that the minister can save the people, or can act as their spiritual proxy, to represent them in the arrangements which may be made for their future welfare, and to secure a place in heaven for them, is generally discarded among us. But it does not, in all cases, seem to be remembered, that, if they cannot delegate to him this office, the people must work out their own salvation. The rejection of the old doctrine, without a recognition of that which should have taken its place, has left the people very much in the condition of the man who, when told that he must not look to the public charity for support, failed to receive the hint that he must now provide for himself. Of course, he died from starvation. How many of our people are starving to death, because they will not by an active faith convert the bread of life into nourishment for their souls!

Therefore, brethren, we charge and entreat you, as partakers with us in the grace of eternal life, to prove the efficacy of your minister's labors among you, and

to *give* them efficacy, by the faithful and Christian lives you shall lead. In this way alone can you show that you comprehend the design, or appreciate the worth, of the institution which dates from those words of our Lord to his apostles: — "Go ye and teach all nations to observe whatsoever things I have commanded you." *Observe*, — that is the hinge of the Christian life, on which every thing turns, — faith, hope, peace, salvation here, glory hereafter. If you do not "observe," — keep, practise, exemplify, — you are no better than heathens; nay, not in so good a condition, for the very gospel in which you boast shall be to you a "savor of death unto death."

And remember, fellow-Christians, that the authority of this religion of ours, which it will be the business of our brother in future to spread before your understandings and to lay upon your consciences, is as wide as life, and as deep as character. It touches on every part of our intellectual or moral, our secret or social history. There is no one opinion which we can entertain, no one habit which we can indulge, no one practice which we can pursue, no one office which we can neglect, no one enterprise which we can either overlook or undertake, that is not judged by Christianity, and upon which, therefore, it is not of the last importance that our judgment coincide with that of Christianity. In other words, brethren, we must be earnest and thorough Christians, — religious men, religious women, from the least work of our hands to the inmost thought of our minds. This is what the Christian ministry contemplates as its le-

gitimate result. If he whom we have this day inducted into his office here should not esteem it the object of his labors, studies, prayers, life, to make you "perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works," he will prove himself an unworthy minister, and the right hand of our fellowship he will have grossly misconstrued. And if you should not cooperate with him in giving to the gospel full dominion over your characters and lives, you will be entitled to the name of Christians only by a courtesy which regards geographical limits rather than spiritual claims, and will forfeit the sympathy which we have now hastened to extend to you.

I press this point the more, because there is at the present day a disposition both to underrate and to misunderstand the work of the Christian ministry. On the one hand, it is pronounced an institution which the age has outgrown, an encumbrance on the cause of truth; and any argument in its favor, an attempt to chain the people to an obsolete and effete agency. On the other hand, some persons appear to regard the minister as chosen to render certain services which he may perform in a perfunctory manner, — to prevent the church-doors from being closed on Sunday, to solemnize marriages, to visit the sick, and bury the dead. The time has passed in which the office was thought to confer sanctity, or to bestow a special dignity upon the incumbent. I am far from complaining that the minister is no longer an object of superstitious dread, or that deference is not paid to him in consideration of his office. I only point

out an unworthy judgment concerning the social position of the minister, which the people must correct by the proof they shall give of the efficacy of his services. Let them manifest in their characters the influence which the public and private ministrations of truth are suited to exert, and the clergy, as a class, will no longer be the object of dislike or distrust. It is the people who must restore the faded honors of the clergy, by carrying the instructions which they receive into the various concerns of individual and relative life. When they live as the discourses and prayers of the pulpit signify to them that they should live, he who stands in the pulpit will have his due share of estimation with the community.

Be it, then, your care, friends of this Christian society, to give all possible success to your minister's endeavours to promote your spiritual good. His success depends on you. I repeat it, the success of the ministry established this day at your request will depend on you. Its success in respect to the visible growth of the congregation will not rest wholly on him. And let me caution and implore you not to expect of him more than he can do; for he is but a man, and but one man, who cannot bend every thing to his own will or his own purposes. But more emphatically still do I say, that the success of his ministry among you, and within you, will depend upon yourselves. Our brother may preach as an apostle would have preached, and like an apostle may "spend and be spent for you," and see his toil rewarded only by the payment of an annual stipend, if you do not

accept his teaching, whether in this place or from house to house, as the rule and spirit of your life. And, my friends, let me tell you, that, if he have the mind or heart of an apostle, he will not be able long to bear insensibility on your part to the force of his instructions. If you wish to subdue the energy of his will, to crush his hope, and convert him into a machine for the execution of certain clerical offices, a heartless, soulless, lifeless, useless minister, treat him with outward respect, but pay no regard to the lessons which he reads to you from the book of sacred wisdom, or from the pages of his own reflection. Allow him no satisfaction in his work, tell the world by your conduct that his relation to you is only an outward relation, discourage him by showing yourselves inaccessible to any influence he can exert; and end this history of parochial justice and kindness, by turning him into a hypocrite, that he may live, or breaking his heart, that he may die. And when you have so kept the promises of this day, and so fulfilled the obligations you have chosen to assume to this victim of your cruelty, go ye yourselves and meet the judgment of another world!

But, Christian brethren, we hope and believe better things of you. We believe you will welcome the instructions and influences of the gospel, as they will be communicated to you by our friend. We commend him to your warmest sympathies. All that we have to say of his rights, or of your rights, is included in this one word. Where there is a true sympathy, there will be no conflict of rights. Concur with him in

the interpretation which I have now given of the design of his office, and you will neither attempt to curtail his freedom, nor fear that he will encroach on your privileges. Striving together that you may reach the perfection of the Christian life, you can only be helpers of each other's joy, and contention or antagonism will be as foreign from your experience as from the harmonies of heaven. Study the things that make for peace, both among yourselves, and with all men. Cast out all evil tempers from your hearts. "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you." Ruin not the fair prospects which are now gathering over your interests as a religious society by renewing painful divisions. Avoid most sedulously whatever might make applicable to you the warning of ancient prophecy, — "He shall stretch out upon it the line of confusion, and the stones of emptiness." Walk in love, in faith, in peace. And may the God of peace be with you and bless you. May the influences of our holy faith enrich and strengthen your hearts. May the fruits of love abound in the increase of those who shall be attracted to your fellowship. May this church resume the position of stability and prosperity, which it long held before the eyes of its sister churches. And may you and your children, and we and all this community, rejoice for years and years to come in the effects which shall have had their commencement in the solemnities of this day.

ORDER OF SERVICES

At the Installation of the Rev. David Fosdick, as Minister of the Hollis Street Society, Boston, Tuesday, March 3, 1846.

VOLUNTARY ON THE ORGAN, AND ANTHEM.

I. INTRODUCTORY PRAYER AND READING OF THE SCRIPTURES, BY REV. F. D. HUNTINGTON.

II. ORIGINAL HYMN.

O Thou, in whose eternal name
Went forth the apostles' ardent host,
Baptize us with the hallowed flame
That fell from heaven at Pentecost!

The fearless faith that cries, "Repent,"
Thy servant's earnest message fill;
By thee the living Word was sent,
Thy presence make it living still.

Pour out its love on every heart
That here on thy great mercy calls;
Relight its fire, its peace impart,
Between this temple's waiting walls.

And while thy people bend and pray
Towards thy benignant throne of light,
Give answer in the dawning day
Of Freedom, Mercy, Truth, and Right.

Immortal Truth! It lives in thee;
Our hope shall lean on thee alone!
Thy Christ be all our liberty,
And all our strength and will thy own!

Father, whose heavenly kingdom lies
In every meek, believing breast,
Reveal before thy children's eyes
That kingdom's coming, and its rest!

Give thy Son's herald, from above,
The anointing of thy Spirit's breath;
The faith that worked in Christ by love,
The trust that triumphed in his death! F. D. H.

III. SERMON, BY REV. DR. PUTNAM.

IV. HYMN.

Thou Lofty One! whose name is Love,
Whose praise all nations swell,
Bend from thy glorious throne above,
And in this temple dwell.

Father, 't is thine, — this sacred hour, —
Thine let its spirit be;
And while each tongue proclaims thy power,
O, turn each heart to thee!

Bless *him*, thy servant, — bid him here
Thy faithful shepherd stand,
To fold for thee, through many a year,
This little gathering band.

Bless him with grace their steps to lead
Where no dark tests divide,
To make the name of Christ their creed,
His life and law their guide.

Bless *them*, thy children, — them and theirs,
In all their ways below;
Be with them, Father, in their prayers,
And with them in their woe.

Be with them when they come to die,
And make the summons blest;
Then, in a better world on high,
Receive them to thy rest. C. S.

V. PRAYER OF INSTALLATION, BY REV. DR. PARKMAN.

VI. RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP, BY REV. CHANDLER ROBBINS.

VII. CHARGE, BY REV. DR. FROTHINGHAM.

VIII. ORIGINAL HYMN.

The patriarch's dove, on weary wing,
One leaf of olive found,
Within the narrow ark to bring,
When all the earth was drowned.

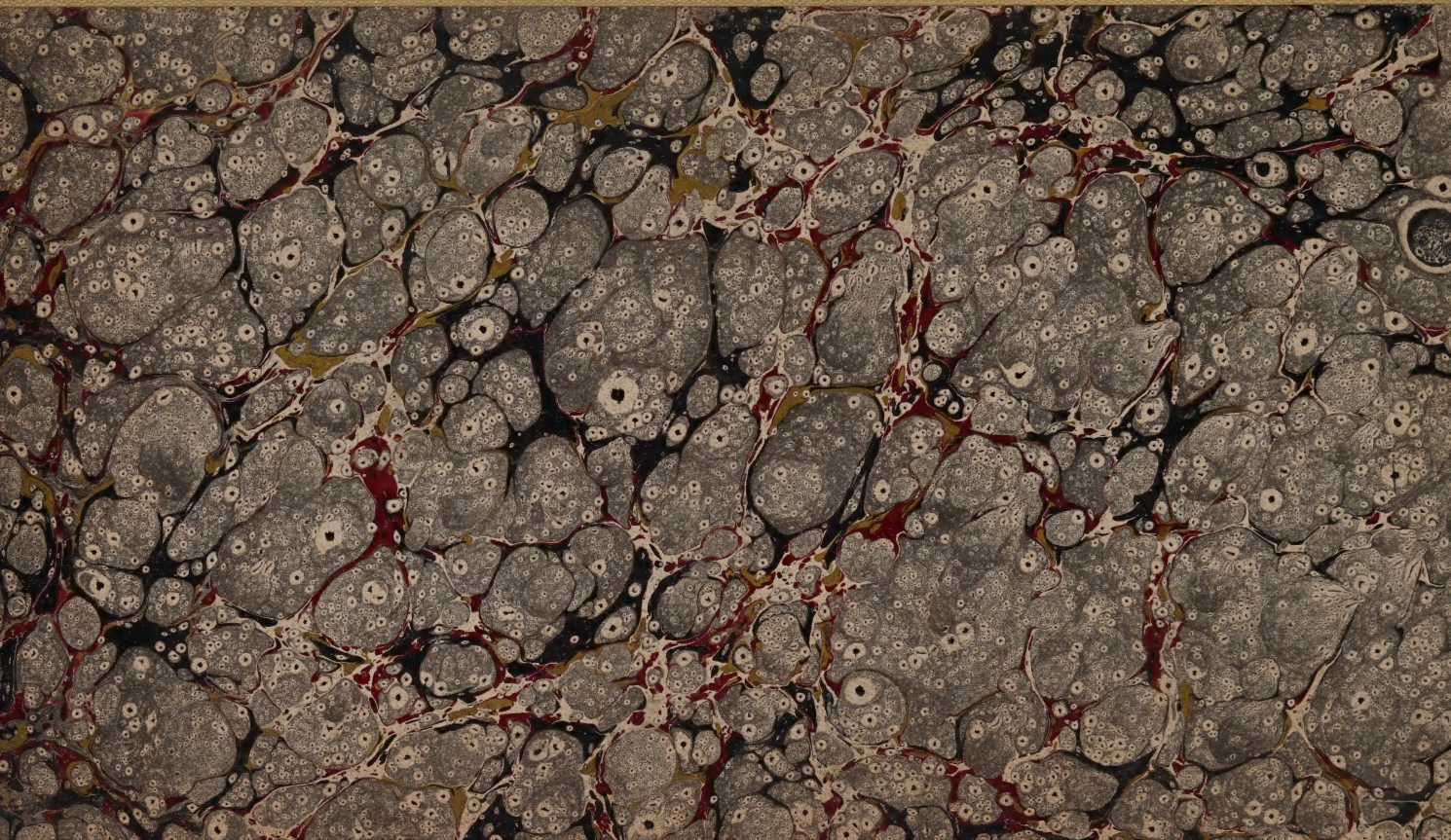
The dove of God in happier hour,
O'er Jordan's sweeter wave,
In symbol showed the Spirit's power,
That all the earth would save.

O Lord! to this our sacred rite
Such gracious tokens grant,
As make thy temples, where they light,
Thine arks of covenant.

And still on life's baptizing tide,
Or sorrow's bitter sea,
Descending peace be multiplied,
And hallow hearts to thee! N. L. F.

IX. ADDRESS TO THE PEOPLE, BY REV. DR. GANNETT.

X. CONCLUDING PRAYER, BY REV. MR. LINCOLN.

XI. ANTHEM.

XII. BENEDICTION, BY THE PASTOR.